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U. S. Could Move Fast in Viet Nam

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WASHINGTON — The United States has no firm plans to send combat troops to South Viet Nam, but if necessary it could commit up to 10 divisions quickly to prevent a Communist take-over in that beleaguered country.

A military mission headed by the President's military adviser, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, leaves today for Saigon on a fact-finding mission. Its assignment is to determine whether U. S. troops are needed to help the South Vietnamese fight off increasing Red guerrilla infiltration.

Whether U. S. intervention could lead to another Dienbienphu or a Korea-type stalemate is one of the more important questions the President will ask Gen. Taylor when he returns in about two weeks.

At the present, military planners do not envision any large-scale movement of U. S. combat units to South Viet Nam, which is the strategic hinge of Southeast Asia. The most likely assistance will be in the form of a sizeable mission of guerrilla specialists to advise and train the South Viet Nam regulars.

THIS SPECULATION was bolstered by the presence on the mission of Brig. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale of the office of the secretary of defense. He is an old Southeast Asia hand with a reputation for brilliance in devising new guerrilla defense tactics.

Before committing any sizeable number of troops to the area, our military planners are concerned first of all with

what kind of war they would be called on to fight. And with whom.

It is no ordinary "fact-finding" mission that accompanies Gen. Taylor, when he leaves today. Included are Walt Rostow, White House assistant on national security affairs, ranking military and civilian officials from the Pentagon, plus CIA and State Department representatives.

The mission departs at a time when the position papers on whether to send in troops have already reached the President's desk. There are no firm plans at present to use combat units. But if the decision were made affirmatively, the Defense Department could respond immediately with—

—Reserve forces already on station in the far Pacific.

—Elements from the 10-division reserve force which will be available in the continental United States by the end of the year.

The 10 divisions include three Strategic Army corps (STRAC) units, the 101st and 82nd Airborne divisions and the 4th Infantry Division, two Marine Corps divisions which will be fully combat ready by year's end with the help of manpower increases voted by the last Congress, the Strategic Army Force (STRAF), composed of the 1st and 2nd Infantry and 2nd Armored divisions, which become available by virtue of release from training duty and other manpower increases, and finally, the two National Guard divisions from Wisconsin and Texas which go into active service today.

BEFORE THE Kennedy administration requested manpower increases and authority to call up reserves, only five divisions were available

Military planners are not worried about the capacity to supply any U. S. force which might be landed in South Viet Nam, although it is 10,000 miles away. They have the supplies and the transport already available in the Pacific from bases on Okinawa and